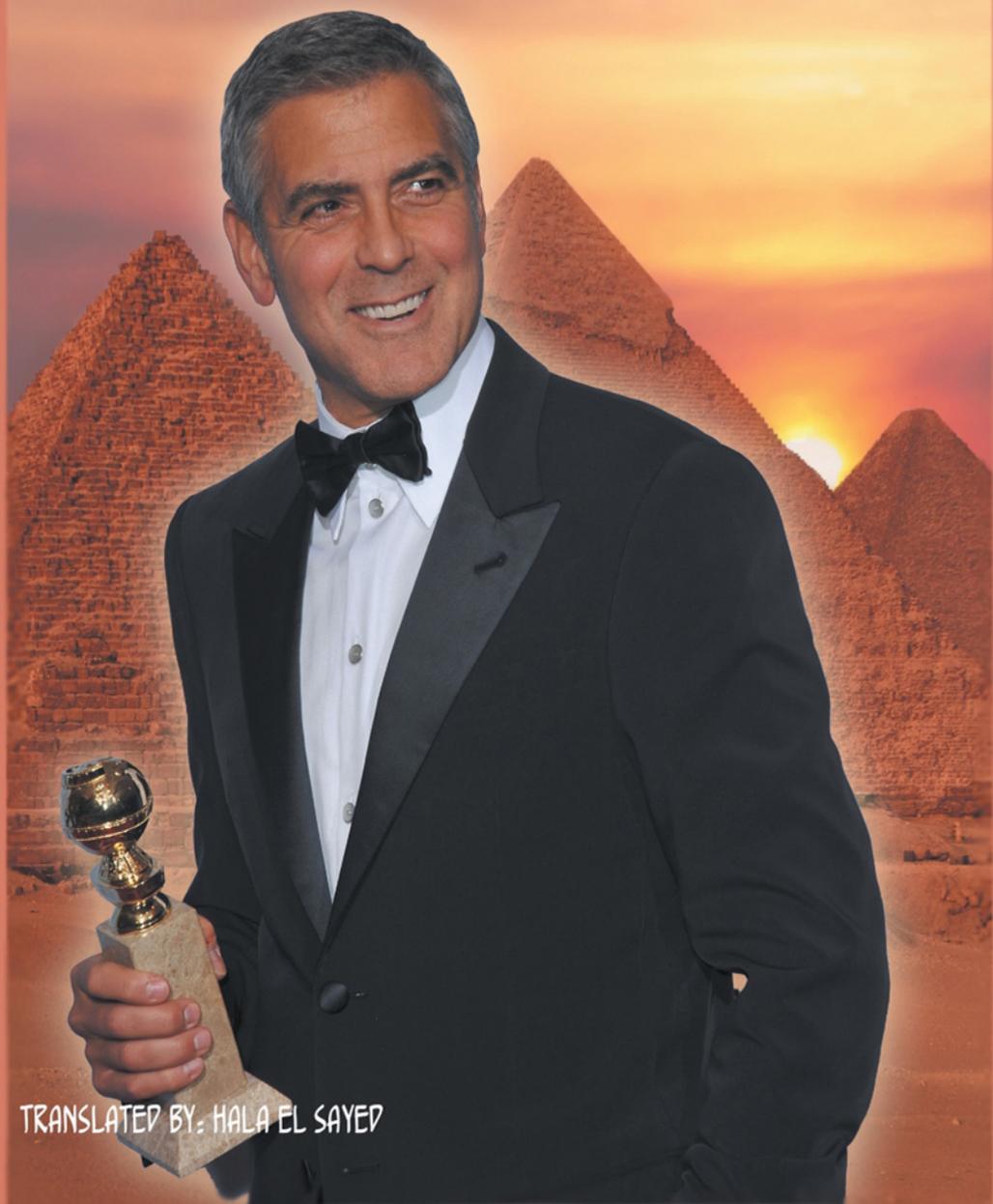


An Egyptian Message to George Clooney

Nazek Taymoor



TRANSLATED BY: HALA EL SAYED

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Hala El Sayed



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A **C**apital of love and its Google
That shall never be forgotten.

A **L**oyal companion to a yearning audience,
Within whose hearts he has royally trodden.

An **O**pen Book of humanity that has,
Through art and activism, been read.

An **O**verwhelming handsomeness that puts him among
Hudson and Grant classics head to head.

A **N**ative Speaker of the language of love,
Who refuses to imprison it in a seal of matrimony.

An **E**mperor upon a throne of stardom,
Whose voice reigned over in symphony.

A **Y**ankee seeker of world peace,
With a satellite, a Nespresso cup, and film art piece.

He is the amazing **Clooney**.

Acknowledgments

I consider myself one of the most fortunate women in this world. I am blessed with a unique and celebrated group of wonderful friends. Their nationalities cannot be pinpointed on a map, for they belong to every place on earth, and their native language is the first spoken by mankind—the language of humanity. Kings and paupers, businessmen and thieves, heads of states and swindlers were all forced to fight wars, and I joined them when they cried aloud against it. They became peacemakers and taught love to humans, all humans. They are not in my life for luxury's sake; they don't represent that kind of friendship. They represent a life parallel to my own, one that I have created, chosen, and lived for myself. It is a life where I practice hope and enjoy art with all the beautiful meanings these things represent.

I lived the dream with them as well as the reality. I got along with them through the good times and the bad. We argued, differed in opinion, and then reconciled. They disclosed to me the corruption of politics and politicians, the subjugation of opinion and fanaticism. We read books together and then burned them after reading. I struggled in a presidential campaign with them, and did not quit till our candidate won. I flew with them *Up in the Air* on a plane, across a future universe on a spaceship, and sailed with them through *A Perfect Storm* on an oceanic vessel. We adored the seagulls together and never forgot to wave our hands to the son of the lighthouse keeper. I traveled with them

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to Hawaii, the most beautiful spot in the world, and to Darfur, the most miserable place on Earth. I won Oscars and Golden Globes with them, and rejoiced for them and with them. Even when they made mistakes, they kept them away to bravely put up with them alone. Because of their presence in my life, I have simply added thirty-four more lives to my own.

To my dear friends: Matt Stevens, Remar, Mac, Seth Gecko, Jack Taylor, Bruce Wayne, Lt. Col. Thomas Devoe, Captain Charles Bosche, Jack Grady, Jerzy, Jack Giesmar, Harry Pfarrer, and Jim Byrd.

To my dearest friends: Jack Foley, Major Archie Gates, Everett, Danny Ocean, Chris Kelvin, Bob Barnes, Dodge Connelly, Lyn Cassady, Jack/Edward, Matt King, Matt Kowalski, George Stout, and Frank Stokes.

To my favorite most precious six friends: Captain Billy Tyne, Miles Massey, Fred Friendly, Michael Clayton, Ryan Bingham, and Mike Morris.

With all my heart, I send a message of love, endearment, and gratitude to the one who presented and represented them to me—George Clooney.

A Special Acknowledgment

A special acknowledgement to the man to whom I have never been the first love or the last. To the man who taught me he shouldn't be my first love and certainly not the last, the man who has put our homeland country amidst us, sometimes even ahead of us, so as to make it the first and the last love of our life together. To my first and last mentor and teacher, my husband, General Adel Youssef Hussein.

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Chapter One:

Why George Clooney?

My Dear George Clooney,

On the other side of your world is a continent called Africa; I believe that you know it. In the heart of that continent lies Egypt, my home country; I believe that you don't know it. With a population of about ninety million people, I can confidently say that one hundred million of them adore you for different reasons and in different ways.

The first 45 percent, who are daughters, sisters, and wives, love you on the basis of the first survival law on earth—the power of “gravity.” The second 45 percent love you on the basis of the second survival law on earth—“adaptation.” That's because they are the lovers, sons, brothers, and husbands of the first 45 percent who find themselves having to adapt to the fateful reality that such an adorable person resides in the hearts of their families, and who, after a long ongoing historical battle, have chosen to live in peace and “engage the enemy.”

The remaining 10 percent are the regular audience, and I believe that they are the most important element in the moviemaking industry. They are the ones really interested in cinema, and who, when they happen to be highly intellectual, can be of added value to the industry, not as professionals, but as an attentive audience who adds to this art as much as it adds to them.

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We are those 10 percent of your audience, and we know that we are your most valuable, the ones who really believe in the value of your art, your opinions, and your humanitarian role in civil work and goodwill. We are the ones who are attached to the real Clooney, the human being, the one who happens to be one of cinema's A-list artists.

* * *

I am an Egyptian businesswoman who will soon reach her sixtieth birthday. I do not know if you deal with this age group or not, but I am a woman whose hometown and current residence is the movie theatre. My nationality is purely Hollywood, and my religion and denomination is that of art, especially the cinema. I have lived there all my life, and there I have met all my friends.

I claim that I am your biggest fan in Egypt, through both the experience of age and the devotion of heart, one that loves you, respects you, and considers you one of the best artists. Although I am one of those to be counted in that remaining 10 percent, my love and respect for you sometimes matches the opinion of your most loving fans, at other times does not quite match theirs, and now and again comes up with a completely new opinion of its own. It may be that those latter opinions actually ignited my inspiration to write this message to you for the whole world to read.

But why him specifically? Why George Clooney?

Before I answer this question, my choice of art as the topic around which this book is centered deserves an explanation before I can clarify my choice of George Clooney as the artist who represents it. My reason is simple—I would like the East

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to communicate with the West. I want those two worlds to sit down and have a sane and meaningful discussion—not a personal discussion about a particular artist, but a dialogue between two worlds that couldn't be further apart. For how else can I address the artist and have a rational discussion with him when the alphabets of our cultures are so completely different? How do I make up a sentence with ABCs that are spelled differently than his?

For that, I couldn't find a better language to address him with than the universal language of the world—art. It is the magic wand that shatters languages, banishes distances, and draws the sole line of communication between two worlds after politics has ruined all other possible means of communication and burnt down all the boats back to a common shore of understanding between them. I chose art as the subject of our talk because it only addresses the mind and the heart. We all have that mind and we all have that heart.

I chose George Clooney as a glorious American symbol who sits on the throne of fame and owns the hearts of millions of people around the world. The magnificently bright light of his culture has never darkened his sight. Rather, it has crept into his heart for him to transform into sophisticated and elegant pieces of art, whose first admirers were the ones living in the faraway lands of the East, the furthest away from his world.

This artist has invaded the hearts and minds of the people with his soft power, from script to direction, from production to role performance, to humanitarian stances. He has reconstructed with his soft weapon what politics and politicians has destroyed, for he still grabs that magical line of communication with his two fists, and still owns that lifeboat back to the common shores of understanding.

I want to address an artist . . .

And I have hit the target, for I have chosen a state-of-the-art man. I cannot imagine anyone being a better example of art, for he grasps it firmly with both hands and touches on every word and synonym in the vocabulary of Hollywood. He took the professions of acting, directing, screenwriting, and producing, and reaped their awards each and every time. There is no one better than this Hollywood dictionary to talk to, for he is not only the son of this profession, he is its father.

He is an American, but not completely made in the USA, even if it did contribute a little to his making. He is also a Hollywood artist, but not completely made in Hollywood, even if it did contribute a little to his making. He is an extremely unique and special case, a genuine human and an artistic phenomenon, a handmade artist.

I want to address a political artist . . .

George Clooney represents the most beautiful statement of conviction that I can hold in my hand to condemn American policies towards my country, the rest of the world, or even the United States itself. In every aspect, be it intellect, oil, wealth and capitalism, corrupt presidential candidates, or waging wars and eradicating people without giving the slightest justification, this is an actor who has neutralized his stance and claimed it through his art. He does this sometimes through exposure, and other times through his vision and taking a stand, and more often with his work and its diversity in writing, directing, producing, and performing.

It might be that when he actually did take a stand it wasn't intentionally with the wellbeing of my country in mind as much as it was an effort to get his country to change its policies for the better by speaking the truth. George Clooney was even wrongly

accused by some—for some mental and visionary deficiency—of being disloyal to his country. Perhaps they do not understand the meaning of activism and positive loyalty. And there came the interests of my country along his path. Perhaps the best thing about his actions and stands is that they are neither overly noisy nor done with full-sized speeches, but are rather effective, insightful, true, and most important of all, calm.

George Clooney is an ambassador of goodwill, and I am not going too far to claim that through him alone we came to know that the “will” can actually be “good.” He is intertwined with his country’s issues, supporting a presidential campaign that he believes in, and declaring through his work and art his opinion about a former president and his policies while he was still in office. He condemned the wars that his country waged unduly, especially the war in Iraq. He is a supporter of human rights, and has had effective and active participation in addressing the issues in Darfur.

I want to address an intellectual artist . . .

One who enjoys the culture of his era, and who is a contemporary symbol of his generation. It is not the culture of books as much as it is the culture of knowledge, vision, and the exercise of views, for contemporary culture is not only about those who read, but also about the awareness of the intellectuals toward their roles and the extent to which they activate it. It is the culture of traveling to Africa and tracing the problems of the people in an attempt to learn about them. It is not the culture of free-time reading, but of formulating an opinion and the ability to present it. In a phrase, it is the culture of practicing a functional culture.

Yes, to the majority of artists today, there is a role that seems political. And yes, the United States does dub them ambassadors of goodwill, although most of these titles don’t go any further than

being a symbol of social status, and sometimes they are just an attempt to beautify the face of politics from America's perspective. But who takes his seventy-eight-year-old father on a journey into the depths of Africa? What exactly is that going to accomplish, and how will it contribute to any cause? Well, the answer is simple—he just pointed his finger there and all the cameras of the world suddenly focused their lights upon Africa. The world knew the location of the problem and started asking what it was, and knowing where the problem is and defining it is halfway to solving it!

George Clooney has merely used his tools: fame, the love of the people, and a great father who always had an active role in politics. Through these tools he shed a light and declared an opinion. As a matter of fact, he doesn't need to do any more than that. Let the politicians come forward, the rulers rule, the historians write, and let all exercise their roles of monitoring and resolving.

Some might say, and it has actually been claimed before, that most of the goodwill involved is nothing more than a distribution of roles from United States politicians to its artists, all under the umbrella of the CIA. Even if that were true, it seems that they have chosen Clooney to perform a positive role similar to all of his predecessors. It is a smart choice that adds to his credit, not the other way round. This is a will and they claim it is good, and though we are left in doubt of the American politics because of its smeared history, we can never doubt the goodwill of those it has hired, for the goodwill here is something that is left only to its possessor.

I want to address a highly charismatic artist . . .

Here we have a “booby trap” artist, a character who is able to entrap and ensnare anyone that comes close to him. This man is fully loaded with charisma; no one who comes close can resist his gravitational pull. He attracts an audience with tools of communication that are smooth, subtle, soft, and sophisticatedly

elegant. Many of today's artists lack that kind of social and emotional intelligence and its tools.

Here is an artist who is capable of shedding light on an event, a piece of work, a problem, or on any subject he desires. He knows when the time is right time to talk and it is time to be silent. He highlights what needs to be highlighted, and hides what needs to be hidden, all through his highly refined communication skills. His language is elegant and neutral, his body language is perfect, and his words are not without a little flirtation and icebreaking humor. He talks about his colleagues and collaborators with all the respect that he can muster, and gives credit to its true deserver. He reaches for his fans behind the red carpet barriers in film festivals to sign that autograph and take that selfie with a smile of a professional artist.

So, if you want to illustrate the model of an artist's effective communication with his audience, or of a successful speech in any of his video or audio interviews, you only need to observe George Clooney. Watching him on *Inside the Actors Studio* with James Lipton in front of an audience of drama students, and then watching as he is asked questions, you notice that he never answers until he has asked its inquirer his or her name. Following all his award acceptance speeches, his words come out fully confident and without fabrication. God has granted him a tuneful and deep voice that helps his presentation. I refer here to all his speeches and lectures in many of his movies as well. Yes, you can claim that this is just acting, but can any actor perform what he does not perfect?

I want to address an artist who searches for the other side of the truth . . .

If I was ever asked to give Clooney a title, the first thing that comes to mind is "The Seeker of the Truth." In many of his

works you find him careworn by the search for it, just as he is with understanding the other. Even if this other happens to be a terrorist, he seeks to understand his intentions and reasons as a part of his search for the truth.

I always ask myself after watching any of Clooney's thought-provoking works why he takes the side of the other once he has managed to understand the motives, and after he has realized how power and politics might have abused his country. Why did he help the other in crossing the border of his country to a safer place after it has been invaded with every form of injustice, and then sacrifice gold to get out of the darkness in one of his beautiful movies, *Three Kings*? It all seemed as if he, along with the writer and the director, only wished to deliver us a message that says the feeling of peace and security for people—any people—is more valuable than gold.

Why does he condemn the aggressor and the invader of other countries even if it sometimes means condemning his own in *The Men Who Stare at Goats*? Why does he take the side of the oppressed, writing, directing, producing, and performing to give a chance for the other's voice to be heard, to rise high and soar, in *Good Night and Good Luck*? Why does he disclose the corruption of the oil policies that suck up and exterminate the wealth of countries, and kill its princes or kings if they dare refuse these corrupt policies? Why does he cooperate in the production and play the lead role with sincerity till he rightfully claims an Oscar for them in *Syriana*? What do they call an artist who has presented all this work and stood by all these causes? Do they just call him an artist? I believe that would be an unfair abbreviation. They should call him a humane artist. And since we have reached that point . . .

I want to address a humane artist . . .

From where did I get this strong feeling that George Clooney possesses such a great value of humanity? I might not know him personally, but in all the characters he has portrayed, his compassionate characteristics as a human being were easily observed. I believe that no actor, no matter how high the level of mastery or professionalism he has achieved, can reach this far if they are not fully humane at heart. And I shall dig deeper into that in some of his works later on.

I want to address an artist with a great sense of humor . . .

Because a good sense of humor is a characteristic of only the smart, the sense of humor that George Clooney displays brings him closer to our Egyptian people, who are well known for it among the Arab world. It makes us relate more to him than any other American personality. As for looks, he does not seem to be too far from our own national features, for he is neither blond nor blue-eyed, just like us. It is true he resembles us in features, for God did create him as a beautiful original; it only seems that a glitch happened in the copy and print from our side.

I want to address an artist who enjoys competition and collaboration . . .

George Clooney works with both major artists and new ones with promising futures of stardom. He even chooses to have them play roles opposite his, not out of confidence as much as out of professional acumen. For if that competition did not work out well for his benefit, it, without a doubt, enriches the whole work.

That said, there are two more rather personal reasons why I love this artist. Yes, they are personal reasons, but this does not mean that they are not art-related. The first is his admirable

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wardrobe. It's not just a matter of shirts and suits or shades and watches that are the most beautiful and elegant, not even Armani. It is much more than that; it's about the one who beautifully befits that wardrobe. He has refined taste. The second reason is his captivating smile, which has a thousand and one meanings, his silent ambassador, that I recommend teaching in acting schools and theaters. I recommend teaching it to the army and navy, for it gives us hope that there is something that is still bright and meaningful in this dark world.

* * *

This book is not only a detailed encounter of the different professional stages George Clooney has gone through, describing in detail the main characteristics of each, but it also tackles the most prominent movies he has made with critical examination, and an extensive enumeration of his biographical, activist, professional, and, most importantly, political sides of his life and works. It is a greeting of love and appreciation to the artist that I want the rest of the world to read along with him.

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